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**July Guns of Colonial Patriots II:
The Battle of Hubbardton
Revisited**



*Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Safford, second in command
of Colonel Seth Warner's Continental Regiment.*

Introduction

Carmine Pacca has already written about the retreat of the American Army from Fort Ticonderoga in July 1777 together with the next day's engagement of its rear guard in battle at Hubbardton, Vermont, from primary sources.¹ [See *Rutland Historical Society Quarterly*, Volume 32, No. 2]

To further appreciate the importance of the rear guard's accomplishments at Hubbardton and to correct some early misunderstandings, more information is required about all the troops that contended there. The glaring need now is to detail American, British and German troop strengths and their casualties as accurately as available primary sources will allow and to describe the occurrences and conditions on the battlefield plateau after all the firing had ended, which will capture some of the flavor of this and other Revolutionary War battlefields where the fathers of our liberty struggled.

BENNINGTON BATTLE CENTENNIAL



Reverend Thomas Allen
Chaplain – Warner's Regiment



N.H. DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

Lieutenant Colonel George Reid
1st New Hampshire Regiment

About the Author

Carmine A. Pacca was born in Shrewsbury, Vermont, but came to Rutland with his family at an early age. He attended St. Peter's School and graduated from Mount Saint Joseph Academy in 1940. For over 60 years he has been intrigued by Vermont's only Revolutionary War battle and the heroism of those who fought there. Carmine served in the U.S. Army Air Corps in the Pacific Theater during World War II. After the war he graduated from the University of Vermont with an engineering degree. For a number of years he worked in private industry in Indiana as an engineer. He retired to Rutland in 1973 and has been an active member of the Rutland Historical Society since that time, serving as an officer and director of the Society and on the Archives, Exhibit and Host Committees.

July Guns of Colonial Patriots II: The Battle of Hubbardton Revisited

by Carmine A. Pacca

On 28 June 1777 the total American troop strength available from the nine Continental regiments garrisoned at Fort Ticonderoga was recorded and within the next seven days no Continental reinforcements were received.

AMERICAN STRENGTH ²

8th MA	10th MA	11th MA	12th MA	14th MA	1st NH	2nd NH	3rd NH	WAR REGIMENTS -NER	TOTAL
45	126	206	144	265	193	212	153	99 R/F Fit for Duty	1443
20	56	79	60	63	66	77	65	62 Staff	548
11	36	49	15	17	88	58	71	25 Sick Present	370
7	4	4	1	0	2	2	12	1 Sick Absent	33
22	123	161	92	51	113	87	126	48 On Command	823
105	345	499	312	396	462	436	427	235 Total Strength	3217

SUBTRACTIONS FROM STRENGTH REPORT

7	4	4	1	0	2	2	12	1 Sick Absent	33
0	26	40	50	42	53	54	59	42 Out of Garrison	366
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16 Lost in Combat	16
7	30	44	51	42	55	56	71	59 Total	415

98 315 455 261 354 407 380 356 176 Total Available 2802

On 5 July 1777, the decision had already been made to abandon Fort Ticonderoga. By the evening Major General Arthur St. Clair had planned for the retreat of his three Continental Brigades composed of nine regiments, followed by the 450-man rear guard of men chosen from the various Continental regiments. These were young men of trusted discipline and efficiency commanded and led by the celebrated Colonel Ebenezer Francis.³ The garrisoned militia troops from Massachusetts commanded by Lieutenant Colonels David Leonard and David Wells were difficult to control and were placed between the brigades. The non-garrisoned militia troops mostly from Vermont arrived a few days earlier with 906 men⁴ commanded by

Colonels Moses Robinson and William Williams⁵ and were assigned as flankers to this retreating army. However, the narrowness of the new forest road leading southeasterly made this undertaking difficult to accomplish in full.

On 6 July 1777, very early in the morning the whole garrison abandoned Fort Ticonderoga in order to evade encirclement and later entrapment by the much superior force of the British and German armies of Burgoyne. Some American troops retreated by water for Skenesborough, New York while others went by land through the new forest road to Hubbardton.

The day was extremely hot and humid and the speed of the retreat was rapid. Some could not maintain the pace. Of the 370 sick present who remained with their regiments about 191 became stragglers because of weakness and the scorching heat. Among these was young Ebenezer Fletcher who had just recovered from the measles and was weak and unable to march with the main army and fell in the rear.⁶ The many stragglers caused the rear guard to fall far behind, arriving at Hubbardton after the main army had pushed on.

When the main army reached Hubbardton, with the rear guard and stragglers far behind, General St. Clair decided to reinforce the rear guard. He left Colonel Seth Warner with the overall command and two more Continental regiments with some militia to join the others as they came up, and then St. Clair moved on toward Castleton.⁷ Shortly thereafter when the rear guard and stragglers arrived, Colonel Warner noted their extreme fatigue and decided that his whole corps would stay for the night. Despite being pursued by the elite elements of the British and German armies, the American commander wisely rested his men for about 12 hours.

Early in the morning of 7 July 1777, this corps commanded by Colonel Seth Warner was the only American force to face the enemy at Hubbardton.

THE REAR GUARD

The original chosen rear guard regiment was commanded by Colonel Ebenezer Francis of the 11th Massachusetts Regiment, aided by Lieutenant Colonel George Reid of the 1st New Hampshire Regiment and Major Henry Dearborn of the 3rd New Hampshire Regiment. Nine captains from various regiments commanded the elements of the 450-man unit. [The captains and the members of the companies are not identified.]

Later at Hubbardton the following units were added:

280 men of the 2nd New Hampshire Regiment, commanded by Major Benjamin Titcomb

176 men of Colonel Seth Warner's understrength regiment
191 stragglers from the 370 sick who remained with their regiments

150 men of the militia from Vermont, New Hampshire and New York [rosters of these units are missing]

This provided a final total corps of 1,247 men led by Colonel Seth Warner.⁸

The elite British corps and the Americans were nearly evenly matched in troop strength at the beginning of the battle on the plateau and for about an hour thereafter. As the third American bayonet countercharge was in progress and beginning to turn the enemy's left flank and with victory in sight, the German vanguard of 205 men appeared. This unit included 125 Yager riflemen and 80 Grenadiers and changed the course of the battle. The Americans, using only muskets, had to pull back to the east to another position and then again to the east side of a long, high log fence where they continued fighting. After a fierce battle that lasted one hour and 25 minutes on the plateau the remainder of the German brigade arrived on the field. Outnumbered by more than two to one, Colonel Warner ordered a disengagement withdrawal with his men fighting all the way up the mountain to Pittsford Ridge. The total battle lasted two hours and 25 minutes⁹ and British pursuit was no longer possible.¹⁰ The American corps had lost the battle but accomplished its mission by shielding the main army.

AMERICAN CASUALTIES AT HUBBARDTON

Research has documented that 35 American troops were killed at Hubbardton. Fifteen were wounded and another 39 died after the battle as a result of the battle. Sixty-four men were missing and 116 men were taken prisoner. This documents a total of 269 men lost at the battle.

Captain Enos Stone of the 12th Massachusetts Regiment, who was one of the prisoners taken by the British, reported that 219 Americans were taken prisoner. If this is correct then there are 103 prisoners unaccounted for by name. These could be the unnamed 100 or more American prisoners recaptured by Colonels John Brown and Samuel Herrick at Fort Ticonderoga on or before 18 September 1777. The British General Fraser says that the Americans lost 150 men killed and wounded but he may have included some missing in this number. Fraser reports that 230 men were taken prisoner. This number is only 11 more than American Captain Enos Stone reported.¹¹

BRITISH STRENGTH

The following research and analysis provides a true report of the documented strength of General Fraser's corps at Hubbardton:

570 Grenadiers¹² [10 Companies of 57 men]
550 Light infantry [10 Companies of 55 men]
440 in the 24th Regiment [8 Companies of 55 men]
1,560 enlisted men in total¹³
256 Commissioned and non-commissioned officers¹⁴

A total of 1,816 officers and men comprised General Fraser's Brigade. Five hundred and forty men were left at Ticonderoga¹⁵ leaving a total of 1,276 men in Fraser's Corps at Hubbardton.

HARPER'S MAGAZINE (1877)



Brigadier General Simon Fraser
British Advanced Corps

HARPER'S MAGAZINE (1877)



Major John Dyke Ackland
British Advanced Corps

GERMAN STRENGTH

The following research and analysis provides a true report of the documented strength of General Riedesel's corps at Hubbardton. Riedesel's strength after 4 June 1777 was:

524 officers and men Regiment Riedesel¹⁶
436 officers and men Grenadier Battalion
532 officers and men Light Infantry Battalion
1492 officers and men in the total force.



Maj. Gen. Frederick Riedesel
Commander of Brunswick Troops

However there were 205 officers and men in the battle vanguard.¹⁷ This meant that Riedesel's effective reserve, which he later committed at Hubbardton, was a total of 1,287 officers and men.

BRITISH AND GERMAN CASUALTIES¹⁸

At Hubbardton the British lost 39 killed and 143 wounded. The Germans lost 10 killed and 18 wounded. This made total losses of 49 killed and 161 wounded and a grand total of 210 officers and men lost from the combined units.¹⁹

THE PLATEAU AFTER THE BATTLE HAD ENDED

The condition of the battlefield plateau ground with scattered tree stumps was the result of tree clearing by John Sellick, the first settler; which he then disposed of on the down slope of the plateau, placing the trees in random dispersion across the slope with tops down. On the day of the battle the downed treetops presented a difficult barrier to the uphill advance of Fraser's corps during the initial stages.

Now after the battle on one of the hottest days of July, some of the combatants had driven themselves almost beyond the point of exhaustion, brought on by the emotions of battle and the heat of the day. Though the battle had ended, one could not relax and enjoy the scene of early pastoral Vermont with a flourishing wheat field to the east, because the wounded and dying emitted sounds of extreme calls for help.

Deeply involved in all this was a 16-year-old American combatant, Ebenezer Fletcher, who related the following experience: While the enemy was gathering up the wounded, the dead and abandoned muskets after the battle, he was discovered hiding face down, wounded, under a log. At first they thought he was dead and removed one of his shoes. When they found that he was alive the British officer ordered the shoe returned. Ebenezer was very terrified when they stood him up and conducted him to the British camp, but here he found brother soldiers in the same situation as himself. He was laid on the ground and remained there in the hot July sun till afternoon before his wound was dressed.

Two doctors, Haze the head doctor and Blocksom the under surgeon, came to his assistance, raised him up, then examined his wound in the small of his back. They took great care that the wounded were well treated and were indeed very kind and faithful. However they also tried to enlist him in the King's service, which he declined on every occasion.²⁰

"To the victor belong the spoils", and the British took advantage of this practice by looting the wounded and the dead. Even the body of Colonel Ebenezer Francis was not spared, for it lost at least a gold pocket watch, important papers, and his pocket book.²¹ The Indians of Captain Fraser's party who were present on Pittsford Ridge also came down to the battlefield and partook of the spoils.

Many of the enemy were very kind while others were very spiteful and malicious. One of them took his silver shoe buckles and left old brass ones, another took his neck handkerchief, then an old black man took his beloved fife. In the end he was stripped of everything he owned. Even the Indians came often to abuse him with their language.

Enemy individuals would often visit with Ebenezer and ask if he wanted something to eat or drink. From his loss of blood he became very dry, faint and hungry, so one of his enemy friends went to the spring and brought water as often as needed; another went on a search for food and after a long absence returned with a piece of boiled pork and some boiled liver. Then he was asked if he wanted a bed to lie on, so this friend found a large piece of hemlock bark and many old coats and overalls, which he put on the bark. Then he laid Ebenezer on the bed. This friend also built a bark shelter to keep the sun and rain from his patient, for it rained some that day and exceedingly hard the next night.²²

General Simon Fraser, the British commander reported that they were busy dressing all the wounded and burying their dead [but not the enemy's dead], also rounding up stray cattle in the woods for the living.²³ General Riedesel, the German commander, reported doing the same except he had Colonel Ebenezer Francis buried in recognition of his conspicuous bravery. The General particularly observed the efficiency of American fighting in open order and later introduced it to his Brunswick troops²⁴.

On 8 July 1777, before noon, the German brigade left for Skenesborough, leaving General Fraser without any support. He therefore ordered the prisoners to build a logwork for the protection of his battle weary corps, fearing that reinforced American units would attack him.

Ebenezer Fletcher's British friend now received orders to march the next day. Therefore on 9 July 1777, at 2:00 AM, General Fraser sent his prisoners to Fort Ticonderoga, left the wounded with surgeons and nurses and then also marched Skenesborough²⁵.

After some days had passed and his wound began to heal, Ebenezer walked northwesterly down to Sucker Brook to the spot where he was shot down and observed that the trees were very much marked with musket balls. Then on 22 July 1777, a group of enemy soldiers arrived from Fort Ticonderoga with enough horses and litters necessary to transport the remainder of the wounded to the fort. This now would be his last good chance to escape from the enemy and he immediately planned for it. He took a good pair of shoes from Corporal Jonathan Lumbard, of the 11th Massachusetts Regiment, who had recently died of his wounds, and in the dark of that night he left the battlefield unobserved. He steered toward Rutland, for he knew that Colonel James Mead would be a friend to him.²⁶

CONCLUSION

Strangely, the battle of Hubbardton has been misunderstood and incorrectly reported by some contemporary historical writers. The battle was not a short engagement of 25 minutes, which ended in a rout and an easy British victory. Therefore, it is outrageous that this well-fought battle should have been made to appear in the American public mind of that day to be a disgraceful retreat. It was anything but that.

A careful study will show that the young Continentals stood well against the elite troops of Europe, that they received three bayonet charges with great bravery and discipline, not giving way to panic or retreat. They also initiated three bayonet counter charges with spirit and complete abandon, and even attempted to turn the enemy's left flank with some success.

To this day there appears to be little American interest in this battle that had lasted for one hour and twenty-five minutes on the plateau. The fierce fighting was a precursor to the turning point of the American Revolutionary War at Saratoga. From this battle the enemy received the distinct impression that the Continentals and militia were not inexperienced peasants but could fight with spirit, courage and stubbornness.

The American forces did disengage and withdraw under orders after the remainder of the pursuing German brigade entered the battlefield, but by then they were outnumbered by more than two to one. In spite of that they did fight holding actions for another hour

moving up Pittsford Ridge to the east. This was not a disgraceful retreat, but a mission well accomplished, for which Colonel Seth Warner and all his men should receive much credit.

END NOTES

- ¹ *Rutland Historical Society Quarterly*, 32:2 "July Guns of Colonial Patriots," pp. 1-16.
- ² Hammond, Isaac W., *The State Papers of New Hampshire*, Vol. XV, Vol. II, p. 136 of war rolls.
Baldwin, Jeduthan, *Revolutionary Journal 1775-1778*, p. 108 Warner's Casualties at Fort "Ti".
Proceedings of A General Court Martial, Philadelphia: 1778, p. 109 On Command In The Garrison Were 457 Men.
- ³ *Proceedings of A General Court Martial*, pp. 77-80. The Original Rear Guard
- ⁴ Noyes, Harriette, *A Memorial of The Town of Hampstead, New Hampshire*, p. 290, "Captain John Calfe's Book Dated At Ticonderoga, Feb. 17th, 1777." Non-garrisoned militia came in at 906 men.
- ⁵ *Proceedings of a General Court Martial*, p. 80. Vermont militia assigned as flankers.
- ⁶ Fletcher, Ebenezer, *Narrative of The Captivity and Suffering of ...*, 1813, By Charles Kendall. p. 123. Recovering from the measles.
- ⁷ Dearborn, Henry, Letter to James Wilkinson, p. 4. Warner's command of the rear guard with added units.
- ⁸ *Proceedings of a General Court Martial*, pp. 77-80, Reconstructed details of Warner's corps at Hubbardton, also see notes 1 & 2.
- ⁹ Greenleaf, Moses, "Diary of ...," *In The History of Beverly, MA*. By Edward M. Stone, Boston: 1843, p. 76. Engaged time on the plateau only.
Stone, Enos, "Account Book and journal of...", MS Rochester Historical Society, p. 303.
- ¹⁰ Fraser, Simon, Letter to John Robinson; p. 146. Pursuit was no longer possible.
- ¹¹ American State Papers, Class IX Claims, pp. 58-161. Casualties.
Gilmore, George, pp. 46-Appendix. Casualties.
Hammond, Isaac W., Vol. XIV, Vol. I, pp. 552, 651. Casualties.
Hammond, Vol. XV, Vol. II, pp. 434, 440. Casualties.
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Nesmith, G.W., *Granite Monthly*, Vol. 1, Feb. 1879, pp. 279-281. Casualties.
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- ¹² Du Roi, August W., *Journal of Du Roi The Elder, 1776-1778*, Translated by Charlotte Epping, Philadelphia: 1911, p. Front piece, p. 163, British

Companies in General Fraser's Corps.

- ¹³ Burgoyne, John, *A State Of the Expedition...*, pp. Appendix XI, XV. Men in Fraser's Corps.
- ¹⁴ Hadden, James M., *A Journal Kept in Canada And...*, p. LXX. Three Sgts. & Cpls. To a company.
- ¹⁵ Stanley, George F., *For Want of a Horse*, p. 112. Officers and men left at Fort "Ti".
- ¹⁶ Stone, William L., *Memories and Letters ...*, 1:101, 102, Remove musicians & servants.
- ¹⁷ Rosengarten, J.G., *The German Allied Troops...*, p. 22. The Yager Company
- ¹⁸ Stone, William L., *Memoirs...*, 1: 202. Casualty, by name, not noted elsewhere.
- ¹⁹ Napier, Francis, pp. 300-304. Casualties. Pell, Joshua Jr. p. 108. Casualties.
- Stanley, George, pp. 114-116, 176-181, 184. Casualties.
- ²⁰ Fletcher, Ebenezer, pp. 3-5. His experience as a wounded prisoner.
- ²¹ Hadden, James, pp. 86,87. Francis' watch, pocketbook and papers.
- ²² Fletcher, Ebenezer, pp. 5,6. His experiences continued.
- ²³ Fraser, Simon, p. 146. Some of the Battle's aftermath.
- ²⁴ Stone, William L., *Memoirs...*, 1:116. The death and burial of Francis. Rosengarten, J.G., *The German Allied Troops...*, p. 125. Efficiency of American troops; p. 129.
- ²⁵ Fraser, Simon, pp. 146, 147. The German and British Corps Left Hubbardton.
- ²⁶ Fletcher, Ebenezer, pp. 8, 9, 10, etc. He escaped from the enemy.

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